

Alcohol, Drug and Cigarette Use by Teens

DEFINITION

Alcohol, drug and cigarette use by teens is the percentage of middle school and high school students who report having used alcohol, illegal drugs (such as marijuana, uppers, or downers), or cigarettes at least once in the 30 days prior to taking the School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) Student Survey.

SIGNIFICANCE

The use and/or abuse of substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs by children and youth poses health and safety risks to them, their families, their schools and their communities.¹ Rhode Island ranks among the states with the highest percentages of adolescents and adults reporting use of illicit drugs and alcohol.²

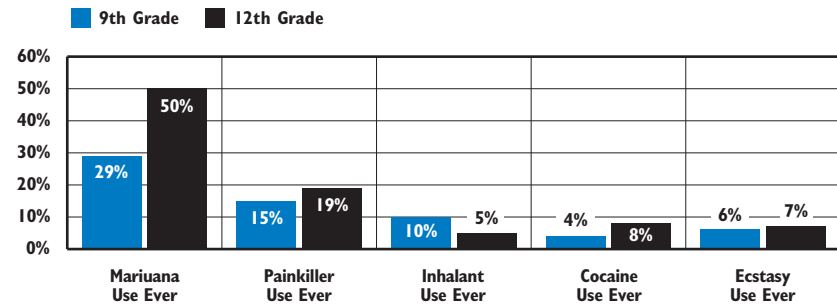
Research shows that the key risk periods for alcohol, cigarette and other drug abuse occur during major transitions in children's lives. These include the transition to middle school, which presents new academic and social situations and the transition to high school, which presents additional social and emotional challenges. There is greater exposure to drugs, to peers who abuse substances, and to social activities involving drugs and alcohol at the high school level.³

The risk for becoming a substance user involves the relationship between risk factors and protective factors, which vary in their effects by age, gender, ethnicity, and environment. Risk factors include early aggressive behavior, lack of parental supervision, peer substance abuse, poor academic achievement and poverty. Protective factors include a strong parent-child bond, parental involvement and support, consistent discipline, academic competence and a strong neighborhood attachment.⁴

Early family and school interventions can build and strengthen protective factors and be tailored to reduce risk factors, which will help to prevent substance use among young people.⁵ Adolescents who participate in school-based, community-based, faith-based or other after-school activities are less likely to use substances than those who are not involved in any such activities.⁶

Approximately one in 10 adolescents in the U.S. who meet standard diagnostic criteria indicating the need for treatment for an illicit drug use problem and one in 14 who need treatment for an alcohol use problem actually receive specialty treatment. This on-going trend indicates a need to expand the continuum of care to engage young people who are unable to go to specialty treatment programs.⁷

Illicit Drug Use by Rhode Island Students in 9th and 12th Grades, 2009



Source: 2009 Rhode Island Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Health Data and Analysis.

- ◆ Among high school students in Rhode Island in 2009, 50% of 12th graders and 29% of 9th graders reported ever having used marijuana. Nearly one in five (19%) Rhode Island 12th grade students reported using painkillers, such as OxyContin, Codeine, Percocet or Tylenol III without a doctor's prescription at least once in their lifetime.⁸
- ◆ One in ten (10%) Rhode Island 9th grade students in 2009 reported ever using inhalants (sniffing glue, breathing the contents of an aerosol spray can and/or inhaling paints or sprays), 6% reported ever using ecstasy and 4% reported ever using any form of cocaine.⁹

Tobacco Use

- ◆ The percentage of Rhode Island high school students who smoked cigarettes on 20 or more days in the past month has decreased significantly over the past decade, from 19% in 1997 to 5% in 2009.¹⁰
- ◆ In 2009, almost one in ten male high school students in Rhode Island reported using chewing tobacco in the previous month.¹¹ In 2009, 46% of high school-age smokers in Rhode Island reported trying to quit in the past year, down from 59% in 2007.¹²

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Table 25.

**Student Reports of Alcohol, Drug and Cigarette Use
by Student Grade Level, Rhode Island, 2007-2008**

SCHOOL DISTRICT	ALCOHOL USE		DRUG USE		CIGARETTE USE	
	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	MIDDLE SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL
Barrington	6%	23%	4%	19%	4%	16%
Bristol Warren	14%	39%	5%	31%	6%	26%
Burrillville	26%	42%	14%	29%	17%	26%
Central Falls	20%	29%	10%	14%	8%	9%
Charlho	13%	43%	8%	33%	9%	28%
Coventry	11%	41%	4%	30%	5%	26%
Cranston	15%	34%	7%	23%	6%	20%
Cumberland	14%	42%	8%	31%	8%	26%
East Greenwich	16%	39%	12%	23%	13%	18%
East Providence	20%	40%	9%	33%	10%	28%
Exeter-West Greenwich	14%	36%	8%	23%	7%	17%
Foster-Glocester	20%	45%	14%	33%	13%	31%
Jamestown	7%	NA	3%	NA	3%	NA
Johnston	17%	42%	7%	25%	9%	23%
Lincoln	9%	48%	4%	39%	4%	31%
Little Compton	7%	NA	3%	NA	3%	NA
Middletown	7%	44%	4%	33%	3%	30%
Narragansett	8%	36%	5%	25%	5%	16%
New Shoreham	NA	65%	NA	50%	NA	28%
Newport	16%	40%	10%	33%	9%	25%
North Kingstown	10%	43%	6%	33%	5%	24%
North Providence	14%	41%	5%	27%	5%	21%
North Smithfield	17%	37%	11%	23%	13%	21%
Pawtucket	22%	32%	12%	21%	10%	15%
Portsmouth	19%	40%	11%	27%	9%	22%
Providence	20%	33%	10%	23%	10%	19%
Scituate	14%	43%	7%	27%	8%	23%
Smithfield	12%	41%	6%	33%	5%	27%
South Kingstown	11%	39%	7%	25%	7%	19%
Tiverton	17%	47%	9%	37%	10%	31%
Warwick	18%	45%	9%	33%	9%	31%
West Warwick	15%	40%	6%	32%	9%	29%
Westerly	18%	46%	10%	30%	8%	26%
Woonsocket	21%	35%	9%	20%	9%	18%
Core Cities	20%	34%	10%	23%	9%	19%
Remainder of State	14%	40%	7%	29%	7%	25%
Rhode Island	16%	38%	8%	27%	8%	23%

NA = Community has no middle school or no high school

Data are for students reporting use in the 30 days prior to the date the SALT Survey was administered.

Sources of Data for Table/Methodology

Brand, S. & Seitsinger, A. M. (2009). *Rhode Island student reports of health risk practices by grade level, 2007-2008 school year*. Retrieved from Information Works at www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu. Data collected by the Center on School Improvement and Educational Policy at the University of Rhode Island for the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Retrieved from Information Works at www.infoworks.ride.uri.edu. Data are for students who reported substance use in the 30 days prior to the date the survey was administered.

Rhode Island state totals include the following charter schools (Compass School, CVS Highlander Charter School, Paul Cuffee Charter School, Blackstone Academy Charter School, and BEACON Charter School) and the following state-operated schools (William M. Davies Jr. Career-Technical High School and Metropolitan Regional Career & Technical Center), as well as the Urban Collaborative (UCAP). These schools are not included in the core city and remainder of state calculations.

The School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT) Student Survey is administered during one 60-minute class period each school year. All students in grades 4-12 in Rhode Island complete the survey, with the exception of students who have been excused by their parents and students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) who are unable to take the survey. Grades included in middle and high school vary by district. For the Rhode Island percentage, middle school includes grades 5-8 and high school includes grades 9-12.

The SALT survey was not administered during the 2008-2009 school year.

References

^{1,3,4,5} *Preventing drug use among children and adolescents: A research-based guide for parents, educators, and community leaders, second edition.* (2003). NIH 04-4212(A). Bethesda, MD: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse.

(continued on page 167)